

Nuclear Power Plants are not Shustov Cognac

The Minister of Atomic Energy, Aleksandr Rumyantsev, told correspondent Vera Romanova of “Tverdi Znak” that the BREST reactor has a very enticing future. But since the technology of production still has not been completely developed, there is no need to rush into active promotion on the world marketplace.

-- Do you think that, without the development of nuclear energy, it is impossible to avoid the energy crisis that has been predicted for Russia and other countries?

-- My heart bleeds when organic raw materials are used for the production of electricity. It is shortsighted and furthermore not the best option for the ecology. Therefore it is impossible to survive without nuclear energy. From the point of view of the Kyoto Protocol, nuclear energy is ideal and fast reactors have internal safeties and fulfill the requirements of nonproliferation of plutonium.

-- Your predecessor in this post, Minister Yevgenij Adamov, actively spoke of the necessity for development of related industry. He especially emphasized that Russia's nuclear energy technology is completely safe. You have made no similar statements up to this point. Why?

-- Yes, I only concern myself with and talk about nuclear energy! But fast reactors are one of the future paths to the development of nuclear energy. As soon as the BN reactors have technical superiority, then it follows that that path will be developed. But in the first stage, there must be many different variants that come highly recommended from a safety standpoint. Therefore, both the VVER-1000 and the BN will be built in Russia. The one misfortune of the nuclear field is that it was developed from the military complex. For this you had to have as much plutonium as possible, but for nuclear energy this material is already in surplus. Therefore, from the point of view of fast reactors able to burn plutonium, this is very good.

-- Is it possible that the BN reactors are no better than the thermal reactors?

-- That question can never be asked. How can one compare which is stronger, a whale or an elephant? From the point of view of internal safety, by its ideology, BREST is the future reactor. But the material questions associated with the use of lead in this reactor have not yet been fully resolved. Although, to build BREST is very advantageous for the development of nuclear energy.

-- What is the current position of the leadership of MINATOM regarding the development of new generation reactors?

-- It is always necessary to develop something new; science cannot stand still. But you must have many different forms, never get locked into only one variant.

-- Are you not planning to implement last year's changes in the strategy of development of nuclear energy, in which it was planned to construct 30 new blocks in 30 years?

-- A year ago, a strategy was adopted – a general document that describes the main direction of development. But there also has to be a tactic; a development that takes into account the real life conditions at every concrete moment of time. If the users of our energy will pay for it 100%, then we may build everything we are planning. But more realistically, at least until 2010, we will be able to build five or six new blocks. They will change both the quantity and quality of energy production of the country.

-- What do you plan to do in order to capture new markets, for the construction of Russian nuclear power plants in other countries? Does MINATOM intend to increase the number of construction sites outside Russia?

-- MINATOM does not need to be the aggressor in the world nuclear market. We are not able to set out with our nuclear power plants like Shustov did with his cognac, when his agents went around Parisian restaurants and cafes ordering Shustov cognac by name. It is impossible to go around the streets of Paris asking passers-by, "Why don't you order a Russian nuclear power plant?" We will enter the market using civilized methods; we will conduct negotiations, campaign for our technology, and show its superiority.